

**Report of the  
Accreditation Visiting Team**

**Thomas Jefferson Junior High School  
5850 South 5600 West  
Kearns, Utah 84118**

**March 30-31, 2005**



Utah State Office of Education  
250 East 500 South  
P.O. Box 144200  
Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-4200

**THE REPORT OF THE  
VISITING TEAM REVIEWING**

**Thomas Jefferson Junior High School  
5850 South 5600 West  
Kearns, Utah 84118**

**March 30-31, 2005**

**UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION**

**Patti Harrington, Ed.D.  
State Superintendent of Public Instruction**

**DIVISION OF  
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND SCHOOL SUCCESS**

**Christine Kearn, Associate Superintendent**

**Brett Moulding, Director  
Curriculum and Instruction**

**Georgia Loutensock, Accreditation Specialist  
Curriculum and Instruction**

**Salt Lake City, Utah**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword .....	ii
Utah State Board of Education .....	iii
Granite School District Board of Education and District Administration .....	1
Thomas Jefferson Junior High School Administration and Staff .....	3
Thomas Jefferson Junior High School Mission Statement and Belief Statements .....	5
Members of the Visiting Team .....	7
Visiting Team Report.....	8
Chapter 1: School Profile.....	8
Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry.....	9
Chapter 2: The Self-Study Process .....	9
Chapter 3: Instructional and Organizational Effectiveness .....	10
Shared Vision, Beliefs, Mission, and Goals .....	10
Curriculum Development.....	11
Quality Instructional Design .....	12
Quality Assessment Systems .....	13
Leadership for School Improvement .....	14
Community Building .....	16
Culture of Continuous Improvement and Learning.....	16
Chapter 4: Northwest Association of Accredited Schools (NAAS) Standards I-XI .....	17
Chapter 5: School Improvement Efforts – Action Plan .....	17
Chapter 6: Major Commendations and Recommendations of the Visiting Team .....	18

## **FOREWORD**

The major purpose of the accreditation process is to stimulate school growth and improvement so as to increase student achievement.

In these efforts, the school staff makes a comprehensive evaluation of the school's programs, operations, and results. The school determines how actual practices align to stated objectives and resulting outcomes. It is a three-phased evaluation: (1) self-evaluation, (2) on-site evaluation by an external team of educators, and (3) implementation using units of the evaluation to improve the school by effecting thoughtful change.

The evaluation, March 30-31, 2005, was conducted because of the school's desire to ensure quality education for all students in the school, and to increase student achievement.

The entire staff of Thomas Jefferson Junior High School is commended for the time and effort devoted to studying and evaluating the various facets of the total program and to preparing the materials used by the visiting team. The excellent leadership given by Principal Karl F. Moody is also commended.

The staff and administration are congratulated for their desire for excellence at Thomas Jefferson Junior High School, and also for the professional attitude of all members of the group, which made it possible for them to see areas of weakness and strength and to suggest procedures for bringing about improvements.

While these recommendations may be used to solicit financial support to acquire some of the materials, equipment, and services needed to carry out a more effective program, it is even more important that the faculty and administration utilize them as they continue to evaluate and modify course offerings and administrative and classroom procedures to more dramatically increase student achievement at Thomas Jefferson Junior High School.

Patti Harrington, Ed.D.  
State Superintendent  
of Public Instruction

**UTAH STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION**

250 East 500 South  
P. O. Box 144200  
Salt Lake City, UT 84114-4200

**District 1**

Teresa L. Theurer  
66 Canterbury Circle  
Logan, UT 84321  
Phone: (435) 753-0740

**District 6**

Tim Beagley  
3974 South 3550 West  
West Valley City, UT 84119  
Phone: (801) 969-6454

**District 11**

Bill Colbert  
14862 S Coalville Way  
Draper, UT 84020  
Phone: (801) 572-1608

**District 2**

Greg W. Haws  
5841 West 4600 South  
Hooper, UT 84315  
Phone: (801) 985-7980

**District 7**

John C. Pingree  
1389 Harvard Avenue  
Salt Lake City, UT 84105  
Phone: (801) 582-5635

**District 12**

Mark Cluff  
645 West Hubbard Cir  
Alpine, UT 84004  
Phone: (801) 756-7623

**District 3**

Edward Dalton  
1323 Bryan Road  
Erda, UT 84074  
Phone: (435) 882-4498

**District 8**

Janet A. Cannon  
5256 Holladay Blvd.  
Salt Lake City, UT 84117  
Phone: (801) 272-3516

**District 13**

Thomas Gregory  
1056 West 1150 South  
Provo, UT 84601  
Phone: (801) 607-4702

**District 4**

Richard Sadler  
875 Edgewood Dr.  
Ogden, UT 84403  
Phone: (801) 479-7988

**District 9**

Gary C. Swensen  
1101 Framewood Ln  
Taylorsville, UT 84123  
Phone: (801) 281-8746

**District 14**

Dixie Allen  
218 West 5250 North  
Vernal, UT 84078  
Phone: (435) 789-0534

**District 5**

Kim R. Burningham  
932 Canyon Crest Drive  
Bountiful, UT 84010  
Phone: (801) 292-9261

**District 10**

Laurel Brown  
5311 So. Lucky Clover Ln  
Murray, UT 84123  
Phone: (801) 261-4221

**District 15**

Debra G. Roberts  
Box 1780  
Beaver, UT 84713  
Phone: (435) 438-5843

**Bonnie Jean Beesley\***

1492 East Kristianna Cir.  
Salt Lake City, UT 84103  
Phone: (801) 359-0295

**Sara V. Sinclair\***

1340 North 1500 East  
Logan, UT 84341-2851  
Phone: (435) 754-0216

**Patti Harrington**

Executive Officer

**Twila B. Affleck**

Secretary

## GRANITE SCHOOL DISTRICT

### BOARD OF EDUCATION

Sarah R. Meier .....	President
Patricia G. Sandstrom .....	Vice President
Hank Bertoch .....	Member
Connie Burgess .....	Member
Lynn D. Davidson .....	Member
Julene M. Jolley .....	Member
Judy A. Weeks .....	Member

### DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION

Dr. Stephen F. Ronnenkamp .....	Superintendent of Schools
Dr. David L. Gourley .....	Support Services/Assistant Superintendent
Rick Forsythe .....	Associate Director, Classified Recruitment & Safety Training
Kent Fine .....	Supervisor, Custodial Services
Bill McLeod .....	Coordinator, Energy Management
Jerry Nielsen .....	Granite Police
Larry Mitchell .....	Director, Maintenance Services
Paul Shepherd .....	Director, Planning & Boundaries
Jim Day .....	Director, School Facilities
Bob Ward .....	Director, School Food Services
Tom Given .....	Director, Transportation
Linda Mariotti .....	Instructional Services/Assistant Superintendent
Craig Stoker .....	Director, Applied Technology
Mary Alice Rudelich .....	Director, Curriculum
Dr. Shauna Mackintosh .....	Grants Administrator, Curriculum
Dr. Jim Henderson .....	Director, Instructional Technology
Sydnee Dickson .....	Director, Professional Learning
Dr. Christine Huley .....	Associate Director, Professional Learning
Dr. Darryl Thomas .....	Director, Research, Assessment & Evaluation
Kevin D. Hague .....	School Services/Assistant Superintendent
Dr. Sharon Prescott .....	Senior Director, Elementary Schools
Dottie Bingman .....	Director, Elementary Schools
Dr. Richard Hyland .....	Director, Elementary Schools
Sundee Listello .....	Director, Elementary Schools
Dr. Louie J. Long .....	Senior Director, Secondary Schools
Dr. Annette Duzett .....	Director, Secondary Schools
Tim Dyson .....	Director, Secondary Schools
Dr. Paul Sagers, Jr. ....	Program Services/Assistant Superintendent
Dr. Claudia Thorum .....	Director, Adult & Community Ed
Dr. Hiagi Wesley .....	Director, Educational Equity

Charlen Lui .....	Assistant Director, Educational Equity
Dr. Paul Ross .....	Administrator, Educational Equity
Brenda Broadbent .....	Director, Preschool
Dr. Kathryn McCarrie .....	Director, Special Education
Sue McGhie-Troff.....	Director, Student Services
Bob Ward.....	Director, School Food Services
David F. Garrett .....	Business Services/Business Administrator
Chris Lewis .....	Director, Accounting & Payroll
Richard Welch .....	Director, Accounting & Payroll
Mitch Robison.....	Director, Budget Development
Dale Roberts.....	Director, Information Systems
Gary Hansen.....	Director, Purchasing, Printing & Warehouse

# THOMAS JEFFERSON JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

## ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF

### School Administration

Karl F. Moody..... Principal  
Dr. Shelly Pierce..... Assistant Principal  
Lynda Tierney..... Intern Assistant Principal

### Counseling

Ruth O'Hara..... Head Counselor  
Brad Goodwin..... Counselor  
Jamie Jensen..... Counselor  
Beth Pasker..... Counselor  
Lynda Patrick..... Counselor

### Support Staff

Kathie Woodruff..... Principal's Secretary  
Chris Stoker..... Financial Secretary  
Kathy Eliason..... Counseling Center Secretary  
Jacki Peercy..... Hourly Counseling Center Secretary  
Cathy Bird..... Hourly Counseling Center Secretary  
Louann Montague..... Hourly Tracker  
Pattie Orgill..... Hourly Tracker  
Tamara Anderson..... Para-Professional  
Brennan Patrick..... Para-Professional  
Jolene Catmull..... Referral Tester, B.D. Unit  
Heather Whitehead..... Social Worker, B.D. Unit  
Jody Foster..... Social Worker  
Heidi Malloy-Palacios..... Prevention Specialist  
Debbie Conner..... I.S.S. Aide  
Julie Evans..... Aide  
Kathy Hackett..... Aide  
Wendy Simmons..... Media Center Aide  
Doug Balfour..... Head Custodian  
Karen Bolton..... Associate Custodian  
Jim Day..... Custodian  
Rita Lloyd..... Custodian  
Gary Mills..... Custodian  
William Archibald..... Sweeper



Paul Brown.....	Sweeper
Eric Johnson.....	Sweeper
Benjamin Throop .....	Sweeper
Debbie Hansen .....	Head Lunch Worker
Pat Bailey .....	Lunch Worker
Sarah Hill .....	Lunch Worker
Linda Lowe .....	Breakfast Lunch Worker
Sharri Winkelkutter.....	Lunch Worker
Linda Zaelit.....	Lunch Worker

### **Faculty**

Jeremy Alverson	Steffenie Drummond	Angelina Malm
Mike Anderson	Robin Dunnebacke	Patti Jo Mazanis
Patty Anderson	Brad Francis	Melanie Owens
Terril Atkins	Todd Francis	Abe Panoke
Kathy Bacher	Miguel Garcia	Jill Petersen
Sherri Branch	Heather Green	Peggy Provard
Paul Brennan	David Head	Katherine Pugh
Katrina Brighton	Angela Herrin	Beverly Renzetti
Brad Butcher	Tom Hohler	Randi Sager
Wendy Carnell	Vi Horsley	Patricia Sabo
Jeni Carver	Terry Hughes	Amy Steed
Laurie Christiansen	Stephanie Hunt	Bud Strong
Paul Christiansen	M.J. Jackson	Larissa Strong
Ted Davis	ShaRon James	Ashley Taylor
Doug DeBry	Julie Jennings	Dale Tominaga
Craig Decker	Joe Kolloch	Tony Wilson
Kristen Dorff	Nicole Lucero	Lynn Wixom

# **THOMAS JEFFERSON JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL**

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

The mission of Thomas Jefferson Junior High School is to promote a safe and positive educational environment that is dedicated to learning, literacy, numeracy, diversity and citizenship. Partnering with parents and the community, our goal is to assist students in becoming life-long learners who are academically prepared, self-reliant and respectful of others.

## **BELIEF STATEMENTS**

### **Commitment**

We believe teachers and students must be committed to quality teaching and learning, so that schools can function as a learning organization and promote opportunities for all to work as a community.

We believe students need a plan for school success, a good schedule, knowledge and abilities, and an ability to set and work toward goals.

### **Safety**

Students and staff must promote a positive climate through work and action, creating an environment that is non-threatening, accepting and encouraging.

We believe a well-ordered classroom, reflecting a consistent discipline plan, creates an environment conducive to learning.

### **Respect**

We believe students, teachers, and parents and administrators deserve respect, acceptance and encouragement.

We believe parents and community must teach or instill basic values of respect, good work ethic, and responsibility in their children.

## **Responsibility**

We believe students need to take responsibility for their educational achievements and that accountability is shared by students, teachers, administrators, parents and the community.

We believe teachers have the responsibility to present subject matter in a clear, understandable, varied, and motivating way, while making connections between the classroom and the real world.

## **Excellence in Academic Achievement and Learning**

We believe that attendance and achievement are inseparable.

We believe that students will learn and use basic numeracy and literacy skills with proficiency.

## **Community and Equity**

We believe that open and continual communication will increase community involvement in our school because parent and family members are key members of that community.

We believe cultural diversity enriches the quality of life.

## **Teacher/Leadership**

We believe food reaching requires commitment to the highest level of instructional skill and practice.

## **Environment**

We believe students learn best in a clean, safe, pleasant, well-ordered and disciplined environment.

## **Outcomes**

We believe students will participate in an individual SEOP process, identifying educational and career goals and a plan for continuing education through high school as it pertains to life-long learning.

## **MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM**

Andrew Odoardi, Madeleine Choir School, Visiting Team Chairperson

Blake Daniels, Centerville Junior High School, Davis County School District

Kathy Evans, Centerville Junior High School, Davis County School District

Mandi Green, Box Elder Middle School, Box Elder County School District

Mitri Muna, Syracuse Junior High School, Davis County School District

Ross Poore, North Layton Junior High School, Davis County School District

**VISITING TEAM REPORT**  
**THOMAS JEFFERSON JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL**

**CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE**

Thomas Jefferson Junior High School is located in Granite School District. Thomas Jefferson serves a suburban community with an ethnically and socioeconomically diverse population on the west side of the Salt Lake Valley. The school has a student turnover rate of approximately 30 percent each year. This provides unique challenges. The ESL population is growing on a consistent basis. The Latino students represent roughly 30 percent of the student population, which adds a cultural richness to the school.

*a) What significant findings were revealed by the school's analysis of its profile?*

Thomas Jefferson has an ethnic and socioeconomically diverse student population. The school utilizes a strong curriculum teaming program that lends itself to cross-curricular thematic units. There is an articulated school focus on Commitment, Safety, Respect, and Responsibility (CSR2). This effort is supported by a decline in student suspensions and discipline referrals to the office. Thomas Jefferson is in the process of moving from a seven-period program to a modified block program. There is an effort to meet the diverse needs of the students ranging from special education to gifted-talented programs. A survey of school effectiveness has been done, although the size of the survey sample is lacking. The total number of respondents included in the survey sample is needed so that more thoughtful judgments can be made about the profile data.

It is important to note that many of the data analyses and descriptions of school practices and programs were embedded in the focus group reports. Both the departmental analyses and the focus group analyses provide a clear sense of the school's working knowledge about the directions to follow for continuing school improvement efforts.

*b) What modifications to the school profile should the school consider for the future?*

It is suggested that the school collaborate with the district in designing an effective management system that can be utilized by different stakeholders within the school community. This effort should extend to disaggregating both state and national norm-referenced test data by content cluster, gender, grade level, and ethnicity.

### **Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry:**

- Focus on a detailed analysis of the survey data to address specific areas of concern in the action plan. For example, include student and parent perceptions concerning the relationship between classroom programs and their life.
- Include Utah Performance Assessment (U-PASS) results with the profile. This will allow breakdown of student populations that need remediation and help focus on the greatest areas of concern.

The Visiting Team encourages the faculty to continue its work to gain access to the individual student data available through COGNOS. The analysis of course grades, attendance, and discipline patterns should be incorporated in the school's comprehensive profile in the future.

## **CHAPTER 2: THE SELF-STUDY PROCESS**

- a) *To what extent has the school community engaged in a collaborative self-study process on behalf of students?*

The school has made an excellent beginning by including the community (faculty, staff, students, and parents) in a collaborative self-study. The sense of community and the richness of the study could be enhanced by the addition of minority parent representation to the process. There appeared to be little or no minority representation on the Community Council.

The leadership team facilitated the staff's analysis of student achievement data and survey results, crafted the school's mission and belief statements, and identified school improvement goals, which were prioritized in the development of the action plans.

From interviews with staff members, parents, and students involved in the process, it was apparent that several stakeholders still have questions regarding the purpose of the self-study and the processes involved, as well as how the DRSLs and action plan will drive the work of the school in the future. As a result, the administration and leadership team need to ensure that all stakeholders are aware of and endorse the school's action plans.

- b) *To what extent does the school's self-study accurately reflect the school's current strengths and limitations?*

It is evident that considerable effort has been made to identify the strengths and limitations of the school. Additional analysis and a focus on the profile data would enhance the self-study. While the staff members of Thomas Jefferson Junior High

School recognize their strengths as effective educators, they are most willing to endorse the concept of continuous improvement and professional growth on behalf of their students. The faculty and leadership have demonstrated how the effective use of the self-study processes has disposed them to gain the skills to accurately identify student achievement gaps, reflect on current educational practices, and examine school-wide practices.

### **CHAPTER 3: INSTRUCTIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS**

Thomas Jefferson Junior High School's desired results for student learning are as follows:

1. Responsibility—CSR2: Commitment, Safety, Respect and Responsibility
2. Literacy/numeracy
3. Communication
4. Real-life skills and application

#### **Shared Vision, Beliefs, Mission, and Goals:**

- a) *To what extent did the school facilitate a collaborative process to build a shared vision for the school (mission) that defines a compelling purpose and direction for the school?*

Thomas Jefferson Junior High spent the past year in a collaborative effort to develop its DRSLs. This consisted of meeting as focus groups and appointing group leaders to further gather information and input. The school also created an accreditation team and leaders within this group. This enabled the stakeholders to gain valuable information from a wide range of academic, curricular, and extracurricular data. For the past two school years they have been able to use their early out Fridays to plan and begin to implement the mission and DRSL selected. Rather than reinvent the wheel, they built upon their CSR2 values.

- b) *To what extent has the school defined a set of beliefs that reflect the commitment of the administration and staff to support student achievement and success?*

The belief statements of Thomas Jefferson Junior High are admirable. To expect students to be committed, safe, respectful, and responsible, in a safe learning environment is what education is about. The challenge is to now implement these beliefs. The school has shown this commitment by identifying these beliefs. The belief statements clearly reflect the commitment of the school to support student achievement and success. The reiteration and attention given to the belief statements are commendable.

- c) *To what extent do the school's mission and beliefs align to support the school's desired results for student learning (DRSLs)?*

Thomas Jefferson Junior High School took its mission statement and belief statements and articulated them down into workable desired results for student learning. These are posted in all of the classrooms.

The Visiting Team recommends that the staff and stakeholders revisit the DRSLs in order to increase levels of commitment among the staff, and define measurable goals and assessment strategies to monitor student achievement of the DRSLs.

Throughout the narratives of the departmental analyses and the focus groups, there is clear evidence of attention given to the issue of alignment of curriculum, instruction, and the DRSLs with the mission and belief statements and in the action plans.

### **Curriculum Development:**

- a) *To what extent does the staff work collaboratively to ensure the curriculum is based on clearly defined standards and the Utah Core Curriculum (with inclusion of the Utah Life Skills)?*

The staff is meeting on Friday early out days and as departments to articulate and implement the Utah Core Curriculum in each classroom. In most areas it is evident that there is cooperation and collaboration occurring. In those areas where it is not happening, the school has identified the problem and is the making necessary adjustments.

The faculty is familiar with the Utah Core Curriculum. Some collaboration between departments has taken place to integrate Core concepts. The Visiting Team feels that a more definitive reference to the Utah Life Skills curriculum might have enhanced the development of the DRSLs by providing the indicators of student performance.

Articulation has begun around what is most essential in the core. There is a strong desire among some staff members to collaborate around integrated curricula and instructional strategies. The Visiting Team suggests that the staff continue to find time and methods for integrating core concepts across content areas and grade levels.

There is a clear sense of the alignments that currently exist with both the Core and the DRSLs, as reported in the departmental analyses. The faculty should continue this process by coordinating key concepts between and among departments.



- b) *To what extent does the teaching staff work collaboratively to support the development of a curriculum that focuses on the school's desired results for student learning?*

Although it is evident that school-wide conversations have taken place around the accreditation process, a clear inclusionary focus cannot be articulated by all staff members. The desired results for student learning do not clearly reflect the outcomes of these discussions. Therefore, increasing school-wide understanding of criteria for selecting the DRSLs will enable the school community to have a clear focus around curriculum and instruction. These DRSLs are broad enough to encompass and reinforce the effective practices already occurring at the school. Clarifying and refining specific action steps connected to the DRSLs will help drive this plan. Formal and informal steps have been taken to promote a collaborative culture. Staff members are willing to invest personal time to accomplish school goals.

### **Quality Instructional Design:**

- a) *To what extent does the professional staff design and implement a variety of learning experiences that actively engage students?*

There is a richness of quality instruction apparent at Jefferson; instructional methods reach across the spectrum from math manipulatives, to teaming, B.E.S.T., gifted and talented classes, special education, M.O.R.E. (Maturity, Ownership, Responsibility, Empowerment), drama, music, sports, and a strong Comprehensive Guidance program—and the list goes on.

During the two-day visit, the following instructional practices were observed: small group work, hands-on activities, direct instruction, worksheet packets, and cooperative learning strategies.

Random students were interviewed by each of the Visiting Team members. They reported that as they go through the school day they experience a variety of teaching strategies. The Visiting Team has observed the faculty to be dedicated, hardworking, and committed to students' success. Designing alternative ways of assessing student work, especially as it relates to the DRSLs, will enhance student engagement and achievement.

With the adoption of the DRSLs, the course curriculum will require modification to increase the number of learning experiences that incorporate the DRSLs into the curriculum. Conversations have started between departments regarding curriculum integration, reading, and writing across the curriculum, and the Visiting Team recommends that these discussions continue. The departments have recognized the need to incorporate reading and writing across the curriculum. The staff might want to pursue using the reading strategies being implemented, and continue to build on

prior knowledge of reading levels and the Six Traits of Writing to facilitate critical thinking and communication.

- b) *To what extent does the professional staff employ a variety of instructional strategies to ensure the needs of different learners are met?*

The faculty has given serious attention to the need to recognize and meet the range of student learning styles and level of need that are encountered in every classroom. The Visiting Team suggests that the faculty collectively research and expand the use of multiple teaching strategies and instructional delivery options to meet the variety of the needs of all students through the use of differentiated instruction.

- c) *To what extent do the professional staff and leadership provide additional opportunities which support student learning?*

It was clear that the staff believes that teaching is “always going on” and is central to all that is done at the school, from the classroom to school activities.

Students report that both counselors and teachers are readily available to assist them. Homework and tutoring programs are available to students after school.

### **Quality Assessment Systems:**

- a) *To what extent has the staff developed classroom or school-wide assessments based on clearly articulated expectations for student achievement?*

Some departments have tried to set up rubrics and other such methods to show students where the expectations for performance lie. There needs to be more school-wide input and investigation as to how assessments are being used in the school.

School-wide assessment is primarily left to the district or state. The mission statement begins to address expectations for student achievement. Data is being used to measure school improvement. Where expectations are clearly defined for staff and students, results are evident. Where state performance standards are in place, teachers are implementing performance assessments to measure growth.

Many classes are using measures beyond paper-and-pencil tests. The focus group report articulates the faculty practice of using a variety of assessments appropriate to content goals and student characteristics. Some classes are using pre and post assessments, but there does not seem to be a set of school-wide standards that are being articulated for measurement. Disaggregating the data will provide additional information on individual student progress and offer the framework for the development of school-wide assessments tied to the DRSLs.

- b) *To what extent are assessments of student learning developed using methods that reflect the intended purpose and performance standards?*

The staff is striving for more opportunities to collect data from assessments beyond standardized test scores. School-wide strategies for performance assessment would provide important additional data. Clarifying the DRSLs and identifying specific measurable indicators will also help facilitate school-wide measurements of student learning. Individualization and differentiation are taking place in some classes and will be strengthened by expanding the conversations among staff, parents, and students regarding who is not learning in the school and why.

- c) *To what extent are assessments designed, developed, and used in a fair and equitable manner?*

Each department needs to assess the methods it is using to assess students. There is no evidence that there is an unfair manner of assessment. At the same time, there is no evidence that there is a push to assure a fair and equitable assessment of each student.

Interviews with students reflected the sense of fairness students felt regarding individual teacher grading practices. There is no school-wide grading policy.

There is ongoing school administrative support and training for access to and use of student performance data. There is a strong desire among the administration and staff to receive and learn to use timely and accurate data in order to better serve the needs of all students. The staff members understand that using data leads them to better instructional decisions.

### **Leadership for School Improvement:**

- a) *To what extent does the school leadership promote quality instruction by fostering an academic learning climate and actively supporting teaching and learning?*

The staff feels and receives support from the leadership team at Thomas Jefferson.

Many of the staff members and parents have assumed the responsibility of leadership in an effort to improve the school on behalf of students. Some of the teaching staff has assumed a leadership role by delivering professional development opportunities for their colleagues. The leadership for the development of the self-study, "Collaborating for Student Achievement," was jointly shared by teachers, guidance counselors, parents and administration.

- b) *To what extent does the school leadership employ effective decision making that is data-driven, research-based, and collaborative?*

Although data is limited, the administration is cognizant of the need to collect pertinent information not only to improve the decision-making process, but also to monitor school improvement efforts.

- c) *To what extent does the school leadership monitor progress in student achievement and instructional effectiveness through a comprehensive assessment system and continuous reflection?*

The leadership at Thomas Jefferson Junior High does not have a comprehensive assessment system in place at this time. The development of a comprehensive assessment system linked to the DRSLs will be one of the school's major tasks as it works to implement the action plans.

- d) *To what extent does the school leadership provide skillful stewardship by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources of the school for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment?*

Parents, students, and staff repeatedly commended the school's leadership for improving the school's climate and culture. School-wide policies and operational procedures are consistent with the school's beliefs and mission, and are designed to support student learning. The allocation and use of resources are aligned with school goals.

- e) *To what extent does the school leadership make decisions related to the allocation and use of resources which align with the school goals, the achievement of the DRSLs, and school improvement efforts?*

Implementation of the action plans will put into place a process for ensuring the allocation and use of resources, which are aligned with the school goals and the achievement of the DRSLs.

- f) *To what extent does the school leadership empower the school community and encourage commitment, participation, collaboration, and shared responsibility for student learning?*

The Visiting Team recognizes the positive and productive relationships that exist among students, teachers, support staff, and administrators. There is strong evidence that the school has created and sustained a learning environment for students that nurtures a sense of caring and belonging. The Visiting Team encourages the staff to continue its efforts to collaborate across departments to foster collegiality and to provide cross-curricular connections for students.

The administrative team recognizes and empowers staff, parents, and students to share in the responsibilities of leadership. In doing so, the administration encourages commitment, participation, and collaboration. The administration is encouraged to continue building the knowledge, skills, and expertise of the staff to

employ data-driven and research-based decision making. The lack of sufficient data and/or understanding of research-based best practices is evident in several of the departmental reports, focus group reports, and action plan goals.

### **Community Building:**

- a) *To what extent does the school foster community building and working relationships within the school?*

Thomas Jefferson Jujnior High School works to establish positive and productive working relationships among all stakeholders.

- b) *To what extent does the school extend the school community through collaborative networks that support student learning?*

The school actively attempts to engage parents in the learning process through a variety of programs. PTSA, classroom volunteers, after-school tutoring, and the School Community Council are examples of efforts made to extend the school community. Guidance counselors actively involve parents in SEOPs. The Visiting Team recommends that the school to continue its efforts to promote the participation of an active Community Council.

The school cites a variety of programs and practices that support student learning beyond the regular program and school day.

### **Culture of Continuous Improvement and Learning:**

- a) *To what extent does the school build skills and the capacity for improvement through comprehensive and ongoing professional development programs focused on the school's goals for improvement?*

The staff members are actively involved in staff development based on their own needs and desires. It is suggested that staff development efforts become more focused on the DRSLs. The staff should continue to look at formal as well as informal assessments in order to collect data to verify that teaching strategies assure student learning.

- b) *To what extent does the school create conditions that support productive change and continuous improvement?*

It was evident to the Visiting Team that the leadership in the school fully supports the faculty, and the faculty appears to fully support the leadership. There is a strong desire to do what is best for students. The departments report in their study that there is a need to develop a clearer focus on the DRSLs as a means to improve

student learning. Additionally, they acknowledge a need to use more data-driven, researched-based information to dictate the school's direction. The staff may want to consider implementing these ideas into its school action planning.

#### **CHAPTER 4: NORTHWEST ASSOCIATION OF ACCREDITED SCHOOLS (NAAS) STANDARDS I-XI**

Most Utah public junior high/middle schools are not accredited through NAAS, but only by the USOE—it is their choice to join or not.

#### **CHAPTER 5: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS – ACTION PLAN**

- a) *To what extent is the school-wide action plan adequate in addressing the critical areas for follow-up?*

The action plan currently addresses several major concerns identified by the staff and reflected in the profile data. They effectively address critical areas for improvement. The entire staff is encouraged to focus its efforts on those areas that will directly impact student learning and student achievement.

- b) *To what extent is there sufficient commitment to the action plan, school-wide and system-wide?*

It was evident to the Visiting Team that the leadership team and administration, as well as many members of the teaching staff, share a strong commitment to the action plans. However, it was apparent that some of the faculty members were not fully committed to addressing the school's DRSLs and recognizing the impact that implementing the DRSLs will have for classroom instruction and assessment. The administration and leadership team will need to secure the commitment of the staff before as they proceed to implement some portions of the action plans and Visiting Team recommendations.

- c) *How sound does the follow-up process that the school intends to use for monitoring the accomplishments of the school-wide action plan appear to be?*

The action plans currently do not recognize the need for monitoring and/or evaluating the effectiveness of the school's improvement plan. In order to monitor school improvement efforts and evaluate their effectiveness, the leadership still needs to identify what data/evidence should be collected and periodically/incrementally analyzed by the team. The Visiting Team suggests

incremental benchmarks and analyses of how the data from the findings affected instructional strategies, instructional delivery, and curriculum content.

## **CHAPTER 6: MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM**

### **Commendations:**

- The Visiting Team commends the staff on a sincere effort to conduct a candid self-study of the school and to use this process to identify improvement efforts on behalf of the students and parents they serve. The faculty learned much about themselves in the accreditation process and see the need for further study to improve the learning environment
- The Visiting Team commends the staff and administration for their conscious and diligent efforts in creating a positive culture and climate conducive to teaching and learning. This is a wonderful school. The students are friendly and feel safe. The teachers care about their students and go any length to help them develop. Responsibility is evident on both sides of the board. Students are given greater responsibility to do their work on time with good quality. The staff feels supported by the administration and happy to work here
- The Visiting Team commends the staff and administration for continued efforts to identify the needs of students and create a positive community image for Thomas Jefferson Junior High School. This image includes providing a safe learning environment, holding high expectations for student learning, and having a staff characterized by caring educators willing to do whatever is necessary to help students succeed. Students were observed to be enthusiastic and motivated to participate in the school activities.
- The Visiting Team commends the constant involvement with PTSA, parents, students, and staff to keep all informed and up to date. The staff knows what is going on and knows the school is a safe environment. The building is sunny and upbeat. Rooms are organized and spacious. Kids are happy and engaged.
- The Visiting Team commends the administrators on their support of the staff and their willingness to share the leadership of the school with the stakeholders.

### **Recommendations:**

The Visiting Team is in substantial agreement with the myriad recommendations that came out of the departmental and focus group analyses and the goals of the action plans. These

goals are indicative of the high quality of the self-study effort and the integrity of the processes working to develop the school improvement plans. The Visiting Team's hope is to provide some focus for the school's improvement processes and link them to attainable results by virtue of the following recommendations.

- The Visiting Team recommends that the action plan include a timeline of realistic long- and short-term goals and dates for implementation and completion. The plan ought to be reviewed and revised as needed to reflect the results of continuous data collection and analysis and focus groups. The action plan should also include a professional development component that would address "best practices," research- and data-driven strategies, curriculum development, etc.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the school continue to seek innovative ways of increasing opportunities for teachers to collaborate, share best practices, and implement the school's action plans. The school needs to engage the whole staff in collaborative inquiry with regard to the school's DRSLs. This would include working to increase school-wide understanding of the purposes and criteria used in selecting the DRSLs, and posting the DRSLs as expectations in every classroom.
- In acknowledging the degree of progress being made, work already in progress, and the quality of the recommendations from the Focus Group reports, the Visiting Team recommends that the faculty collectively study best practices and research in the teaching and assessing of the school's DRSLs, and identify indicators and establish the standards for students' demonstration of the DRSLs.
- The Visiting Team recommends that Jefferson Junior High School continue to develop its self study document by (1) collecting additional data, disaggregating and analyzing student data and (2) aligning the action plans to address the findings resulting from the profile and departmental analysis of how well students are meeting the desired results for student learning.